

The Republican.

No. 24, VOL. II.] LONDON, Friday, June 17, 1825. [PRICE 6d.

PETITION OF RICHARD CARLILE AND OTHERS TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

*To be allowed to communicate their knowledge to the more
ignorant Christians, free from persecution.*

THINKING ourselves unfairly dealt with by Mr. Hume, with respect to the petitioning of the House of Commons, we, six of the Honourable House of Moral Blasphemers, resolved to try whether we could not get something like fair play from any other member of the House of Commons. Sir Francis Burdett, we knew, had no regular tact of doing good, was only famed for fits and starts in well doing; therefore, we did not apply to him. Giving Mr. Brougham credit for more parliamentary courage and ability than any other member on what is called the opposition (bateful word) side of the house, we resolved to begin with applying to him. Our petition and application were perfectly free from all servility, hypocrisy, and cant: they were as plain and candid as they could be made with an absence of insolence and disrespect. All that we said in the way or shape of flattery to Mr. Brougham was, to ask him to bestow upon the presentation of our petition, a little of that fearless eloquence, which he was in the habit of bestowing upon similar topics, and, in case, he felt that he could condemn the persecutions we had sustained for the attempt to establish free discussion. In fact, our humility was such as to lead us to flatter ourselves much more than we flattered Mr. Brougham. Mr. Hume had, in a manner, shaped our former petitions to his liking, and then kept us in suspense for months before he presented them. Here there was nothing of the kind. It was late on Saturday the 28th of May before our petition and application were left at Mr. Brougham's Chambers; and on the third meeting of the

Printed and Published by R. Carlile, 84, Fleet Street.

House of Commons, we found a presentation that excelled our hopes. The following is a copy of the petition.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The petition of Richard Carlile in the sixth year of an imprisonment in Dorchester Gaol, of Thomas Riley Perry sentenced to three years imprisonment in Newgate, London, of William Campion sentenced to three years imprisonment in Newgate, of William Haley sentenced to three years imprisonment in Newgate, of John Clarke sentenced to three years imprisonment in Newgate, and of Richard Hassell sentenced to two years imprisonment in Newgate, all now progressing with their sentences.

Sheweth,

That your petitioners have been prosecuted for, and found guilty of, not being Christians, according to the general adoption of the Christian Religion in this country, and for publishing reasons why they were not Christians of that kind.

Your petitioners, therefore, pray, that your honourable house will be pleased to enact a law, that shall extend to them the freedom of discussion, allow them to publish such opinions as those to which their enquiries might have led or may hereafter lead, and release them from all further pains and penalties for past publications of the kind.

RICHARD CARLILE.
THOMAS RILEY PERRY.
WILLIAM CAMPION.
WILLIAM HALEY.
JOHN CLARKE.
RICHARD HASSELL.

We stated in our letter to Mr. Brougham, that our petition had been studiously made brief, as our chief offence consisted of a defence or justification of our principles. The following debate is a compilation from three Morning Papers, "The Times," "The New Times" and "The Morning Chronicle:" though not a copy of either, there is not a sentence, not a word, but is to be found in the one or the other of these papers.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, JUNE 2.

Mr. Brougham presented a petition from Richard Carlile, and five other individuals, whose names he mentioned. The petitioners stated, that they had been prosecuted, and were immured in different prisons of the country, for not being Christians according to the forms of the established church, and for stating their reasons why they were not so; and they prayed that the house would rescind the various sentences which had been passed against them, and admit them to the same toleration that was enjoyed by other Dissenters. No one who knew him (Mr. Brougham) would suppose that he was inclined to patronize any species of indecent ribaldry against the institutions of the country. He considered such ribaldry to be a crime in itself, and to be the very worst mode which could be adopted to propagate any kind of opinions. For, suppose the party who held such opinions to be right, and the rest of the country to be in the wrong, the expression of them in ribald or indecent language was calculated to affront the feelings and rouse the indignation of those whom he ought to conciliate rather than offend, if he wished to make them proselytes. He therefore said, that if these petitioners were right, the most unwise step they could take for the extension of their doctrines, would be to attack the received doctrines of the country in low and scurrilous language. At the same time he thought that the law ought not to press too heavily upon them because they appeared to be, in a certain degree, enthusiasts and fanatics; and toleration, as well as expediency, required that they should not be subjected to that degree of punishment which would entitle them to be considered, either by themselves or by others, as martyrs to the principles, such as they were, that they professed. If they had taken a bad way to attack the religion of the country, it was incumbent upon us not to take a bad way to defend it; and the worst of all possible ways would be to inflict severer punishment than their offences required. Having thus endeavoured to guard himself against misconstruction, he would say, that he could conceive no harm as likely to accrue to religion from fair and free discussion: and that until the mode of discussion became so offensive as to excite against it the feelings of almost every man in the country, prosecutions for blasphemy were among the very worst methods of defending religion. That was his deliberate and sincere opinion, and he could hardly conceive any instance in which toleration could be carried too far, either to the religion professed or to the persons professing it. He moved that this petition be brought up.

Mr. Peel made several observations, but in a tone of voice which was almost inaudible in the gallery. He was understood to concur with Mr. Brougham that prosecutions should not be instituted

on the score of religious opinions, so long as those opinions were expressed in fair and temperate language; but he contended, that as soon as they vented themselves in scurrilous attacks on established institutions, they deserved the attention of the civil authorities. He maintained that the libels published by Carlile and his fellow-petitioners were of the description mentioned by the hon. member for Winchelsea—they were revolting to the feelings of every moral man in the country, and were therefore properly selected for prosecution. The rule, perhaps, was a good one, as to free discussion, so long as men confined themselves to advocate their own opinions, without attempting to make proselytes. He did not see how Mr. Richard Carlile could be well held up as an object of mercy to the Crown. So far from expressing any contrition for the offence he had committed, he gloried in it, and not only boasted that he would continue to repeat it, but actually carried his boast into execution. To his sister, Miss Carlile, the mercy of the Crown had been extended; and she had shown herself not undeserving of it, by refusing to participate any further in the blasphemous publications of her brother.

Sir F. Burdett protested against the principle laid down by the right. hon. Secretary, that a man who was suffering punishment for religious opinions, should not be entitled to any mitigation of it, unless he turned hypocrite, and retracted the opinions he believed to be true.

Mr. Monk ridiculed the idea of defending religion by prosecuting blasphemy. There was no law in America against blasphemy, and yet he believed that no country in the world was more free from what was generally called blasphemous publications.

The fact was, that, in the case of these individuals, they were mostly in confinement for selling "Palmer's Principles of Nature," which really consisted of no ribaldry, but of argument. There could be nothing found in it worse than in Gibbon and Hume.

Mr. Secretary Peel explained that he did not mean to insist that after a person thus convicted had paid the penalty of the law, and in consequence of his not being able to pay his fine, still continued in prison for a period that might be considered an equivalent to the amount of the fine in the eye of the Executive, that he was to be called on to express his contrition as a *sine qua non* of his enlargement.

Sir F. Burdett contended, that upon the principles laid down by his learned friend below him, and agreed to by the right hon. Secretary opposite, all prosecutions for religious opinions were inexpedient. It was agreed on all hands that religious opinions ought to be tolerated so long as they were expressed in temperate language; but it was now argued that as soon as those opinions were so expressed as to disgust every honest mind, then they ought to be visited with punishment. It appeared to him that under such circumstances they ought not to be noticed, because,

if they were so poisonous as was represented, they carried along with them their own antidote. (Hear.) It was his opinion, that if Mr. Carlile had been left to himself, and had not been prosecuted by the Government, he would at this moment have been totally unheard of; whereas by prosecuting him, the Government had given him a notoriety which he could not otherwise have acquired, and had got themselves into a scrape from which they found some difficulty in getting extricated. He thought that the infliction of great severity on any man for his opinions, no matter how offensive they might be, was the most certain way not to wean him from, but to confirm him in, those obnoxious opinions.

Mr. W. Smith remarked, that it was only the prosecutors who denominated the publication an offence, and they were interested parties.

The petition was then laid upon the table.

Mr. Brougham, in moving that it be printed, said, that he would take that opportunity of stating a fact which he had forgotten to state in presenting the petition. So far was the punishment inflicted on these petitioners from having put down publications of this obnoxious character, that if he was rightly informed, they were sold openly in all parts of the town. (Hear.) There was not a day or night in which you could not purchase any of those objectionable works, so that the object had quite failed of suppressing them. And what was the use of an argument on religion if it were to be all on one side [hear, hear!] ? Nothing thrives under persecution but error, and it was most unjust whilst the subtle poison which was to be found in Gibbon was left unpunished, although it was on the shelves of all the noblemen and gentlemen, that the poor man should be sent to prison [hear!] It had been said, that if the discussion of religious truths were calmly conducted, it ought to be permitted. A wonderful admission truly ! Why, where would be the use of the discussion of religion, if the argument was to be all on one side? (Hear.) He then pointed out the glaring inconsistency of denying to the poor the right of reading any discussion upon the truths of Christianity, and of allowing to the rich the privilege of having in their libraries the works of Gibbon, and all such writers. If these publications were, as they had been said to be, calm argumentative works, they ought to be, as they now in fact were, sold in the open light of day every where. These poor men had only published sentiments similar to those of Hume and Gibbon, for which no one would think of prosecuting Cadell and Davis, Millar, or Murray.

Mr. Hume contended, that this poor man Carlile had been robbed of his property by the Sheriff, amounting to 3,000*l.* in books, and hence he could not pay his fine, though only 1,500*l.* There were many persons now incarcerated in different gaols in the country, for a similar offence, and it was high time, since the In-

quisition had gotten so great a shock in Spain and Portugal, that England should cease to play the part of Grand Inquisitor of Europe.

Mr. Secretary Peel begged to set the Honourable Member right, and relieve the House from the alarm his misstatement was calculated to create, by assuring them there were not above six or seven persons in gaol, on account of this and similar offences.

Mr. Hume.—I thought there were nine or eleven.

Mr. Secretary Peel.—Certainly not.

Mr. Hume wished the right honourable Secretary would answer him one question—was not this country the only country in Europe where individuals were at present imprisoned for religious opinions? He recollects the time when this country was filled with gladness and rejoicings because the inquisition was abolished in every country in Europe; but if our prisons continued to be filled as they were at present, with individuals suffering for religious opinions, England would succeed to the vacant post of inquisitor-general for Europe, than which he could conceive nothing more derogatory to its interests and honour. (Hear.)

The Attorney-General defended the course which had been pursued by the law-officers of the Crown with regard to these petitioners. He contended that the prosecutions which had been instituted against them had been effectual in suppressing blasphemous publications, and argued that it was unfair to blame ministers for keeping them in prison, when they were consigned to it by a sentence of the Court of King's Bench, arising out of those prosecutions. They were most of them imprisoned for selling Palmer's *Principles of Nature*, and he would say that a more horrible, blasphemous, and scurrilous libel, than that work, had never issued from the press of any country. The juries who had tried these petitioners were not more shocked by the work itself, than by the manner in which the parties had ventured to defend it.

Mr. Brougham said, his cause of complaint against the Law Officers of the Crown had been, that they had brought down on the country the memorable six Acts of Parliament, on the plea that the law as it stood was not sufficiently strong, when it was now clear that they might have done without them. With regard to Palmer's *Principles of Nature*—a work which he had never read—he would undertake to say that it was not half so bad as any publication of either Hume or Gibbon. Voltaire's works were full of ribaldry and indecency, and yet he had never heard that they had been prosecuted for corrupting the morals of the ladies and gentlemen at the west end of the town. (A Laugh.) If works of this description were to be prosecuted, he thought that the prosecutions should be directed to the works read by the rich, instead of being confined, as they now were, to works read exclusively by the poor. Without again alluding to Gibbon,

who, no doubt, was on his Hon. and Learned Friend's shelves, neatly bound, though they might not shake his orthodox mind, he would remind the House that every bookseller was selling the works of Voltaire, without the slightest apprehension, though no man ever wrote on the subject of religion with more scorn or ribaldry; and as it was clear a man might write a libel, or publish one in French, as well as in English, he asked, was it not highly improper that the Ladies and Gentlemen of the West end of the town, who read French (laughing) should be liable to be contaminated by such dangerous poison as that of Voltaire, when the effusions of an argumentative writer, like Palmer, without any of the other's ingenuity, had subjected, already, numbers to years of almost hopeless incarceration? He repeated, that such works as those, for the publication of which the present petitioner had been prosecuted, were by no means so dangerous as many that remained unnoticed. The combined argument and wit of Gibbon, and the combined subtlety and wit of Hume, had not drawn upon them the vengeance of the established authorities. The work in question was by no means so full of ribaldry as the works of Voltaire; yet the works of Voltaire were in the libraries of every lady and gentlemen in the West end of the town.

The petition was ordered to be printed.

It is clear, from the foregoing debate, as well as from all that has been said in Parliament, or in the Courts of Law, of late, upon this subject, that we have reduced the Christians to a mere complaint of our style of attacking them. Pray, Christians, judge, if not fairly, at least, rationally, between us, and ask yourselves, if it was ever a bargain between combatants, where and how the blows should be placed? Would it be wise to have an agreement mutually made before hand, as to where and when every blow should be placed, and which should be the conqueror? Wiser not to combat at all. Pray, did you ask me, when and how I would like to be arrested; into what prison I would like to be thrown; how long I would like to be kept there; and how many of my family and friends I would like to have similarly treated? Did you ask me in how much I wished to be fined; how many books, or what quantity of other property, I wished to have stolen from me to meet those fines; and what particular amount of brutality would satisfy me in Dorchester Gaol? What offence is there in the style of my publications compared with your treatment of me? and, pray, do not forget, that you began to persecute me before I had put a sentence upon paper in self defence. Now, do, Mr. Peel, be honest for once, and say, as the re-

presentative of my Christian opponents, whether, if I were disposed to make concessions or compromise, you would be satisfied with *any style of attack on my part*, with any thing short of my silence, disgrace and complete degradation? You will never obtain a shadow of any thing of the kind from me; for the more you press it, the further you will drive me from it; but do say, if any thing short of this will satisfy you.

Mr. Peel is made to say, in this case, what he has said before as to the Catholics, that *there should be no efforts to make proselytes!* This is a very ignorant, or very dastardly conclusion. The Christian Religion, all religion, and, indeed, every proposition is founded on truth or on error; or on a mixture of truth and error. If wholly true, so far from being injured, free discussion will be wholly in its favour. If wholly erroneous—why should it be kept up? why should it not be exposed? If a mixture of truth and error, why should it not be purified by free discussion? why should not the error be removed and the system be purified, be made respectable, by freeing it from every corruption? It was well said by Mr. Brougham, that *nothing thrives under persecution but error.* He might have added, that *persecution was the criterion of error on the part of the persecutors.* No other argument need be advanced against it, if the persecution could be called forth without argument. A strong combatant plays with a weak opponent, is jealous of interference to help him, and blushes at the idea of undue advantage. Now, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Bible Religion, I will meet you upon any terms, so as you do not absolutely tie my hands and tongue. I will be the very essence of politeness in my exposition of your errors. I will deal with you, as if you were my best friends, my sisters, and brothers, and children, in error, if you will but retrace your steps in persecuting me. If you are not prepared to accept this proposal, pray, say not another word about ribaldry or style; but fight on, and admit, that I fight fairly; since you are by no means deficient in the use of those weapons, of the alleged use of which on my part, you complain.

But this charge of ribaldry must not so quietly be passed over. I deny it altogether, and challenge the Christian World to take my volumes of 'The Republican' and prove it. I denied it the moment that I knew Mr. Hume had commenced such a false charge. I was answered indirectly, that my writings or publications were not *ribald*, in the

sense or definition which I gave to the word, and which was commonly given to the word; but in some other sense, some new sense, a Christian sense of the word, got up to suit my assaults upon that religion, and for the want of any other kind of imputation against me: and when I pressed a definition of the new sense, the charge was silently admitted to be in no sense whatever, a mere calumny, a base truckling to error, a piece of hypocrisy, the tribute which skulking vice pays to open and undaunted virtue.

My career has been a novelty, and all novel impeachments of established error give great offence to uninquisitive minds. The first men, who presumed to doubt the purity and infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church, whilst in the plenitude of its power, were monsters, not only thought unworthy to live in that age, but unworthy to rot unmolestedly when dead. And now the point of offence has taken a turn: it is criminal to adhere to that Roman Catholic Religion! A few years hence, and the publications of Richard Carlile will be the sacred writings of the day and malice will be imputed to those who dissent from them. Without pretensions to any thing more than a calculating spirit, I prophesy, that my name will receive more, and more lasting, reverence, than any religious name has hitherto received. No ribaldry will be found in my writings—no malice imputed to my motives—no violence marked in my conduct. I shall be seen to have maintained my principles with mildness, rather than with violence, and to have exercised more forbearance than a calm and clear judgment will perceive to have been proper. I am now seen with the jaundiced eye of prejudice and bigotry, and judged by a party whose unjust gains I attack. Assailed alike by the clamours of the interested in abuses and the fears of the timid inquirer, I can do nothing right in their eyes that presses upon either: but, regardless of both, I must proceed, and suffer, if further suffering be necessary.

If mine are called strong and violent means to propagate my opinions, what must be thought of the denunciations on the part of the writers of the Bible; what must be thought of the denunciations of the religious writers and preachers of the present day? Do I say, that you will be damned, and ought to be tortured without end, in a lake of fire, because you will not follow my opinions? Do I threaten you with any kind of punishments? Do I seek to injure you in any the least degree for dissenting from me; or do I invite you to free, fair and mild discussion? You make it a crime in

me to dissent from you, and call me violent for daring to shew a reason for it! Tell me, then, how I am to deal with you, so that we may proceed in mutual improvement? I am one of the most docile animals, where I am met with docility and fairness; but I am also a resisting animal where oppressions are sought to be heaped or continued upon me.

If I err, explain that error in particular and not in general terms. Correct me with higher knowledge; but do not abuse and persecute me, if my knowledge happens to be higher than yours, and if I dare to expose your errors for the general good.

A writer in the Edinburgh Review has some share in my character. I saw a call for a genius that should write exclusively for the poor. Write for the poor, thought I, how can that be better done than in the exposure of all written errors which oppress them? What is the use of any other writing for the poor, than that which shall remove those priests and that aristocracy which press them to the earth? without the conceit that I was a genius, I resolved to write for the poor. That I do write for the poor, and the poor only, I find a proof in the persecutions and calumnies which I receive from the oppressors of the poor. I write for the poor, though all of that class do not see it. I write for the poor, or the rich oppressor would not persecute me. The following is the extract from the Edinburgh Review, to which I allude, and to which my attention has been lately called again by a friend. The subject is a review of

"Religious Tracts."

"THEY are intolerably stupid, and all, apparently, constructed on the supposition, that a thief or peccant plowman are inferior in common sense to a boy of five years old. The story generally is that a labourer with six children has nothing to live upon but mouldy bread and dirty water; yet nothing can exceed his cheerfulness and content; no murmers, no discontent: of mutton, he has scarcely heard; of bacon he never dreams: furfurious bread and the water of the pool constitute his food, establish his felicity, and excite his warmest gratitude. The squire or parson of the parish always happens to be walking by, and overhears him praying for the king, and the members for the county, and for all in authority; and it generally ends with their offering him a sbilling, which this excellent poor wretch declares he does not want, and will not accept! These are the pamphlets which goodies and noodles are dispersing with unweared diligence. *It would be a great blessing if some genius would arise who had a talent of writing for the poor.* He would be of more value than many poets, living

upon the banks of lakes, or even (though we may think highly of ourselves) of greater value than many reviewing men, dwelling in the garrets of the north."

Edin. Rev. vol. xxxvii, p. 36.

Another word about Mr. Peel's *no-proselytism*. Proselytism is the first principle of free discussion, and none but the ignorant or dishonest man fears it. Discussion cannot be carried on without proselytism. Parties cannot exist without proselytism. Sects are built upon proselytism. But give us free discussion and proselytism will soon be at end. Education will take a new course, and proselytism will be unheard of in the admission, that all are in pursuit of the highest state of knowledge. Make knowledge the ground of education, and not religious tenets, which are founded in ignorance, and you will soon have a community free from sects and proselytism.

Mr. Peel has a brother in the Church, and, as a matter of course, wishes to see him in one of the richest bishoprics. I, on the other hand, seeing that the poor have been bishoped enough, wish to prevent Mr. Peel's brother from being a bishop, not to give the preference to another, but in the abolition of the mischievous office. This is a sufficient matter to procure for me the hatred of Mr. Peel, and of Mr. Peel's family, and of all persons similarly situated. This is one reason why Mr. Peel objects to free discussion and proselytism. He has no confidence in the foundation of the Established Church. If he had such a confidence, he or any man would be as loud as myself in the call for free discussion. Seeing that *matter* is the *first principle* of which we have a knowledge, and *motion the second*, I am not afraid to submit the principles of materialism to a free discussion against the fancied principles of spiritualism.

Again, as to ribaldry. Mr. Peel caught hold of Mr. Brougham's condemnation of ribaldry and excused himself in the late persecutions, by saying, that the publications prosecuted were precisely of that character. This was a falsehood. The publications, preferred for prosecution, were Paine's Age of Reason and Palmer's Principles of Nature, and publications more free from ribaldry never issued from the press. Minds more serious and more chaste, than those of Paine and Palmer never existed. Even Bishop Watson did not accuse Mr. Paine of ribaldry: and he would not have missed the opportunity, if he could have done it on any fair ground. It is true, that many did and do cry out

against my publications, as Mr. Peel stated ; but it is also true that as many are loud in their praise and are ready to defend them against whatever knowledge Mr. Peel can accumulate against them. Let him bring his clerical brother to visit me, and see, if, with their united abilities, they can substantiate a reason, why the latter should be a bishop. Let him enquire, if the cry against my publications be aught more than the cry of ignorance or interest.

As to the style of my writing, I have to remind Mr. Peel and Mr. Brougham, that I write for the poor. I could write in what is called elegant language, if I thought it as useful; but I see clearly, that my grand object should be to open the eyes of the working people, who have no groud for hypocrisy, and not to seek to make a few proselytes from among an aristocracy, who have every reason to be hypocrites, and who, indeed, set no value upon religion, but for its tendency to stupify and degrade the mass of the people and to render them more easy to submit to all sorts of taxation. I declare that I have never wistfully sought a friend from among the aristocracy. My eyes are never upon that class but for exposure. Notwithstanding, I have no objection to receive the friendship of any person, who can approve of what I am doing and support me in it.

My opponents should take another circumstance into consideration. Seeing all religion to be founded in error, I see it all to be vicious, and seeing it all to be vicious, I cannot feel that I ought to treat it with any kind of respect. For instance, the Christian religion has its foundation in sexual incontinency : a married woman is made to have sexual intercourse with a supernatural being, to become pregnant, and to bring forth a child in a natural way ; and still, we are told, that she remained, in every respect, a virgin, in relation to her husband, to her God, and to her child ! A more monstrous tale was never submitted to the credulity of mankind. How, I ask can this subject be discussed, in what the customs of society call elegant language ? Impossible. The fault of the language used in the discussion is in the subject discussed. For instance, some of the fathers of the Church carried on a furious controversy, as to whether the Virgin Mary emitted semen in her intercourse with the supernatural being. Was the fault or indecency of this controversy in the discussions carried on by these persons, or in the tale on which it originated ? Some modern physiologists would have settled the question, by saying, that the female does not emit semen in sexual intercourse. This, the inspired Saints did not know. I waive the subject, as my

elucidation must be clear, that the style of my writing is not so much a fault in me, as in the subject which I discuss.

Excepting these observations about ribaldry, which were not justly applicable, I have to express my thanks for the manner in which Mr. Brougham presented this petition, I have never taken any steps to urge petitions from the country, indeed, have rather discouraged it; but it is clear that these petitions for free discussion are unlike all others; for they promote the very thing for which they ask, even if not legislatively granted. We may petition for parliamentary reform for a century and get no nearer to it, than at present; but these petitions for free discussion form the basis of every kind of reform. We put the thing in progress by asking for it, whilst we practise free discussion in spite of persecution. It is not a petition to be allowed to practice free discussion; but a petition to be allowed to do it unmolestedly: a petition against persecution. I am not about to advise all my friends to send up petitions to Mr. Brougham, in this or the ensuing sessions of parliament, if any imprisonments be continued next year; but to disperse petitions among different members, now we have found one who has done his duty, and that without visible reluctance. No corrupt power can stand against free discussion fairly maintained. It is the only principle that can accomplish universal conquest: and that conquest it will accomplish and with it the happiness and highest state of mankind. It is the only panacea for human ills: and since philosophy has made such a progress, as to pursue scientific acquirements upon the certain basis of excluding error as it proceeds, he is the enemy of the human race, who opposes or interrupts free discussion.

RICHARD CARLILE.

COPY OF A LETTER SENT TO THE KING,
CARLTON PALACE.

SIR, Dorchester Gaol, June 10, 1825.
MR PEEL, your Secretary for the Home Department, is such a generous churchwarden, as to say, that he has been brought on so far as to allow, that free discussion is all fair, so as we do not make proselytes from his church, nor say

any thing that can annoy churchmen : which is like saying, that free discussion is all fair, when the talking and abuse is all on the side of power and not of truth, and when all persons out of power and office and church, are very cringing and accommodating creatures, to those who are in power, in office, or in church. Though we have assuaged Mr. Peel's persecuting spirit and considerably softened his tongue, we have yet a great deal to do, to bring him to a sensible and philosophic, to a statesmen-like view of the question of free discussion. But further he must come, or yield his office to a mind more capable of enlargement.

I must beg you to scold him for fibbing in the House of Commons, and, if, like a good father or master, you take the rod, pray lay it on as well upon your Attorney General for the same fault. Mr. Peel, in answer to all complaints as to my treatment, pleads his liberality or lenity towards my sister: and, on the 2nd Inst. he observed, that she had merited that liberality and lenity, by refusing to have any thing more to do with her brother's blasphemous publications. He should be more careful how he speaks to and of those who can and will answer him through the press, if not in the House of Commons. The truth is, that he was neither liberal nor lenient to my sister, as his speech in the House of Commons on the 26th March 1823 will fully show. He let her out, when the Visiting Magistrates of the Gaol told him, that they were afraid to see her in the Gaol any longer, from fear of bad consequences, and that, in fact, they could not keep her without treating her worse than a felon, or to allow her to corrupt the felons with her company. This was the ground of liberality and lenity on which she was liberated. It was I who manœuvred to accomplish her early liberation though I cannot accomplish my own, without a degradation to which I shall never submit. The leniency shewn to my sister was, that she was prosecuted, because Archbishop Tillotson had observed, that the Old and New Testament described two kinds of a God, because, Mr. Paine had made a proper comment on that observation, and because she published that observation and comment. She was sentenced to one years imprisonment and five hundred pounds fine; kept in prison two years, or another year for the fine; and very brutally treated for several months of that time by your representatives, who manage this Gaol. And this is Mr. Peel's Christian liberality and lenity towards an unoffending female opponent.

Capital offences are often committed for two years imprisonment. It is rare that more than two years imprisonment are inflicted in any the most atrocious cases, excepting the publication of useful knowledge.

As to her meriting Mr. Peel's leniency, or your mercy, I engage, that she holds it in like contempt, and would under similar circumstances, have done as I have done. It is not true, that she has refused to have any thing more to do with blasphemous publications; for she has continued to sell as many as possible, in the part of the country in which she has been residing since her liberation. She has not taken a shop for that purpose to sell to all enquirers; because she respects those persons who became her bail. That alone keeps her out of a shop. When she first entered my shop, it was not from a knowledge or love of the principles I was advocating. She did not understand them. But whilst in Gaol, she studied those principles, and now, she is really attached to them, and for aught that concerns herself alone, would not mind another year or two of imprisonment for them. I have engaged to give her all the books she can sell in Devonshire, and to give her nothing else for past services or present subsistence; so, unless you will make a better provision for her on the pension list, you may be sure, that she will do her utmost in the sale of my blasphemous really blasphemous books. To blaspheme religion and religious men is a virtue; because it is an opposition to vice.

Mr. Peel will never bring me to his terms; I will bring him to mine, or see him out of office. On matters of religion, I can instruct him, as to right and wrong: and to the power of right and truth, supported by a free discussion, he must yield. I will make proselytes from his church, and annoy him and his fellow church-men, by repeated proofs, that religion is vice, and that his church is built with fable, upon a very sandy foundation. He shall be taught, that free discussion, *with* proselytism, and annoyance to bigots and hypocrites, is a very good sort of thing.

Let Mr. Peel keep up the cry of *no-popery* if he likes; he must not be allowed to cry *no-discussion*. Popery cries *no discussion*, and Mr. Peel to be consistent, ought to take me by the hand as his most powerful assistant against the progress or recovery of Papism. If he will do this, I will engage to keep him safe from the Devil on one side and the Pope on the other, and soon to send both Pope and Devil out of existence. At present, they exist only in the ignorance or

fears of such men as himself, and may be speedily annihilated by free discussion.

I am, Sir, your prisoner,

RICHARD CARLILE.

MR. CARLILE, DORCHESTER GAOL.

SIR, 7, George Street, Hammersmith, June 4, 1825.
You have not noticed all the injustice of Mr. Serjeant Arabin's decision in the case of Mr. Christopher. Mr. Irving (the fact cannot be too often repeated) said all the literary and scientific men of the day, are infidels. All I know are so except one, a Christian, a Methodist, and a rascal. In public offices, there are a great many Infidels; and, at the time the reductions took place, a *fool* in THE TIMES censured ministers for retaining two Atheists and Infidels, when many pious and loyal men were dismissed. On a knowledge of this, and thinking death too severe a punishment for forgery, I wrote to Mr. Harmer, Mr. Fontleroy's attorney, advising him to examine the Bank Clerks, and all gentlemen as to their faith. He did not think proper to do so; but if the plan be adopted, the Christians will soon be glad to let us partake of the benefits of the social compact, (I do not use the humbug word, *Constitution*, they may keep its BENEFITS !!!) the evils of which we are compelled to bear. If I were called to prove a murder, or a rape, the villain would escape.

The absurdity of the learned Serjeants' conduct (I was in Court) was equal to its injustice. He advised the Pawn-broker to give up the watch to Mr. C., this of course, he was unwilling to do, as there was no evidence who it belonged to. The learned Serjeant then told Mr. Wontner, the Governor of Newgate to advise him: this was equal to a command: and the prisoner was virtually declared a thief by the same Judge, who legally (Query, illegally?) directed her acquittal: and who bore testimony to the credibility of the Infidel witness at the very time he refused to hear him: now, I would ask, whether the Pawn-broker is to lose the value of the

¹ J. P. will say, here is a pretty fellow: reviling the Constitution who the other day boasted his loyalty. Although, I am loyal*, I must inform him, that I am not constitutionally compelled to be a fool.

* I use the word in its generally received sense, attachment to the monarchical form of government. It is useless to dispute on what a word did mean; usage is the only law of a living language.

watch, without a word of evidence to shew that the girl came by it dishonestly? Or, is "Johnny Bull to pay for all" the learned Serjeants' nonsense, nic-named justice?

As I have mentioned the word *justice*, I would ask by what rule the relative value of money to liberty is estimated? It must be the rule of the universe, where more requires less, and less requires more; for Theodore Hook was imprisoned *a few months* for ELEVEN THOUSAND POUNDS²; you TWO YEARS AND A HALF, for fifteen hundred pounds.

J. P. has fully proved the correctness of my judgment, that he was not worthy a serious refutation. He is defeated, and shews that he feels it, by losing his temper, and, fanatic-like, resorting to abuse (which he *poor thing* mistakes for wit) instead of argument. His admission that the distinctive principles are elementary compounds must settle the question with every man capable of reasoning; but thinks better of himself than I do, if he suppose I either wish or *expect* to convert HIM. He is evidently incapable of taking a philosophic view of the subject, and his last sentence proves he has forgotten his own. In either case a man of sense must know, that so far from my being pig because I sometimes eat pork, J. P. might live upon ass-flesh for ever, without the possibility of becoming *quite* an ass.

I am, Sir, your humble Servant,

R. T. WEBB.

² And Theodore had the gratification of robbing for, and spending his eleven thousand, whilst I have been robbed and imprisoned for not paying as a fine that of which I was robbed. R. C.

TO MR. R. CARLILE, DORCHESTER GAOL.

Halifax, Monday, March 21, 1825.

MOST ILLUSTRIOUS FRIEND AND HERO IN DEFENCE OF TRUTH,
MAY you be pleased to accept this small sum as a token of gratitude from a few friends. The martyrdom you have suffered the heroism that has at all times actuated your mind, the importance of such nobleness, is badly remunerated.

It is to be hoped, that tyranny delusion, despotism, and persecution are fast approaching their end, never more to rise. May the people keep a steady aversion to all fanatical bigotry—may they be more and more disgusted with the black slugs—may man reflect on the laws of nature,

No. 24, Vol. XI.

wishing to promote the interests of all his fellows, is the wish
of your very

Humble Servant,
On behalf of the Subscribers,

JAMES GREEN.

Mr. Ely James Stansfield	5	0	W. Firth	0	3
James Green	1	0	Kendal	0	3
Isaac Hanson	0	6	J. Halstead	0	6
Adam Johnson	0	6	Cliff	0	3
T. Fawcitt	0	6	B. C.	0	6
William Mathews	0	6	G. B.	0	6
Abraham Sutcliffe	0	6	By William Mathews, from		
Robert Piercy	0	6	Elland	4	6
C. Cain	0	6			

TO MR. JAMES GREEN, HALIFAX.

CITIZEN, Dorchester Gaol, June 12, 1825.

I ASSURE you that I do not feel any ground of complaint against the bulk of the people. I am sure they will follow their interest when they see it; and if they do not see it, if their eyes be blinded by those interested in their ignorance, they, the people, are more to be pitied than blamed. But we are progressing well. For myself, as an individual, or with respect to my family, I consider that I have had fair support, and am grateful for it. Had I more, it would not have gone towards an increase of family comforts, but towards the bringing forth of new publications. I attribute the fault to the few, that we do not make greater progress in certain neighbourhoods. The fault cannot be with those who do not see right, but with those who do see right, in not boldly communicating their knowledge to their neighbours. They hide their talents. I can see no fair reason, at this moment, why every comparatively independent man of my opinions should not speak out as I and many others do. We can beat our opponents at argument; therefore, to speak out is to be certain of triumph.

I thank you for this support and exhort you all to speak out boldly. You will then find friends, whom you did not before know, and who did not know you: who were silent because they fancied that they stood alone.

Respectfully,
RICHARD CARLILE.

William Haley has published threepenny worth of advice in the shape of a "Word for Ireland." He also purposed to shew the admirers of Blackstone, that this author's general deductions of English Polity are hostile to what is now called the English Constitution. This is to be done in half a dozen sheets at three pence each, one of which has appeared.

THE following petition has been got up at Hull and numerously signed. The accompanying letter will explain something of its history. Had it not been rejected by Lord King, it would not have been printed here until after its presentation; but seeing little chance of its presentation, I venture to print it as a matter of equal weight.

R. C.

To the Right Honourable the Lords Temporal and Spiritual of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament Assembled.

The humble petition of the undersigned inhabitants of Kingston upon Hull and its vicinity.

SHEWETH,

THAT as opinions on religious and other subjects are not of that optional nature to be adopted or laid aside at pleasure, like articles of dress, we conceive it to be extremely unjust to punish any individual for the mere expression of his opinions.

That, however such punishment may accord with the disposition and practice of professing Christians, it is utterly incompatible with the principles of the Christian religion, and disgraceful to those who inflict it.

That if the extermination of error be the object of it, we cannot conceive why raving fanatics should be permitted to lead the weak and ignorant astray, or indeed why any should be permitted to utter opinions at variance with the doctrines of "the only true Church as by law established."

That however erroneous the opinions of those men may be, who for promulgating them, have been deprived of Liberty and property, we need not remind your Lordships that men of great learning in all ages and nations have entertained similar opinions.

That trite as the observation is, it is not less just, that persecution always defeats its own object, by diffusing those opinions it wishes to destroy: and we now find that, instead of its being a check on certain publications, it increases the number of them.

That although but few of your petitioners are of the same sentiments as those entertained by Richard Carlile in Dorchester Gaol and by his Shopmen in Newgate; yet, for the reasons above stated, and others which might be enumerated, we feel indignant at their imprisonment and enormous fines, and humbly implore your Lordships to prevent a recurrence of such unjust and impolitic proceedings, by taking such steps as will establish on a firm basis, "Freedom of Discussion!" which may expose error, but can never injure the cause of Truth.

That it appears to us grossly inconsistent to support at an enormous expence, as it has been now proposed, one set of people, viz. the Catholic Priests, to propagate doctrines notoriously "damnable and idolatrous," and at the same time to punish others for promulgating certain opinions, which however "damnable" they be are certainly not "idolatrous."

That we humbly refer your Lordships for a precedent to the case of Dr. Bastwick, who having been punished and imprisoned for publishing some heterodox notions, was afterwards, by the authority of parliament, justly compensated, by the payment to him of five Thousand Pounds out of the estates of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

That finally we humbly trust, after your Right Honourable House shall have taken that case into your serious consideration, that your Lordships, in the same spirit of equity, will be pleased to institute such proceedings as will lead to the early liberation of the above individuals and secure to each of them a suitable compensation, not from the Archbishop of Canterbury individually; but from the property of those who instigated their prosecutions.

-And your Petitioners will ever pray,

TO MR. RICHARD CARLILE.

DEAR SIR,

Hull, May 30, 1825.

LITTLE did I imagine that the petition, of which I sent you a copy, was calculated to do any mischief, and yet a noble Lord (King) seems to be of a different opinion. I inquired of him by letter, if he would present and support the prayer of it. He declined doing it, for a reason, I certainly did not anticipate. These are his words "because I think that it will do more harm than good to the cause you espouse, by exciting the intolerants to action instead of leaving the question at rest as it now is*."

I am very confident that you will entertain no apprehension of that sort, but still, I should like to know your sentiments on the subject. From the tone of Lord King's speeches on the Catholic question. I imagined, that he would be pleased with having such a petition to present. We are now really at a loss, to whom to send it. Discussion is what we want to provoke, and that is not likely to be produced by a ministerial member presenting it †.

Yours, sincerely,
J. J.

* His Lordship seems to have gotten by heart, the lecture read to him by Lords Elden and Liverpool.

R. C.

† I am not sure of that; but opine, that we have just as many friends on the one side of the House of Lords as on the other.

R. C.

MR. RICHARD CARLILE, DORCHESTER GAOL.

MUCH ESTEEMED FRIEND, Portsea, July 1, 1825.
 You will see by this that we have not quite forgotten you; we shall never forget you while we are in existence; and we are well assured the enlightened world never will for ages after you are taken to our mother Earth; further, we are satisfied none of us will ever go, let the fanatics preach whatever they will.

We, now send you £2. 2s. 6d. wishing it were enough to en-

ble you to disseminate sufficient knowledge to enlighten the unenlightened and baffle the machinations of your enemies and persecutors.

We wish your liberty from unjust confinement: being justly assured whenever that happens you will visit your friend at Portsea, who will receive you with heartfelt congratulations, until that period arrives.

I subscribe myself in behalf of the Portsea Subscribers,

Yours Respectfully,

GEORGE BROUGHTON.

A rejector of Revealed Religion, for Mr. Carlile	10 0	was converted into the black whore of England	2 0
Do., for his Imprisoned Shop-men	10 0	A Mathematician	1 0
James Mouland, Materialist	0 6	B., an Enemy to cant, hypocrisy, falsehood and tyranny, and consequently, to Priests and Kings	1 0
No. 1, a Friend.	2 0		
No. 2, no Enemy	1 0	S. J.	1 0
I. C., a Materialist	1 0	A Unitarian	1 0
W. F., a Friend to the principles of Mr. Paine	0 6	J. R., a Detester of all Craft	1 0
Ragged Jack now got tight		M. R. a' Friend to the Cause.	1 0
And see's the Truth in its full light	1 0	A friend	2 0
S. S., a Female, partly a Deist and partly a Materialist, and a whole Republican	1 0	I. S., an Atheist	0 6
B. M., who believes that the Scarlet whore of Babylon		Go on brave Carlile, says a Unitarian	1 0
Carlile and the parsons will never agree		Poor Vulcan's mite and Motto for his much esteemed and persecuted friend Mr. Richard Carlile	2 0
Carlile is for making his Countrymen see.			
The Parsons whole trade is to blind people's eyes			
By, praying, and preaching, and publishing lies.			
Thus, all Carlile's efforts to teach truth and reason			
The Parsons pervert to blasphemy and Treason.			

MR. GEORGE BROUGHTON, PORTSEA.

SIR,

THOUGH I have been so long imprisoned, the time glides with me as light as ever it did whilst passing my most pleasant days in your neighbourhood. If we consider the mind as a principle distinct from the body, in a Christian view of the matter, my body is persecuted for the offences of the mind, whilst the offending power bids defiance to persecution and throws down the persecutors of its body. I have long seen that I shall, or that some

Dorchester Gaol, June 8, 1825.

one or more who will tread in my path, will, reduce all our great national questions, as Sir Francis Burdett calls certain nonsensical propositions, to the one which we are now advocating. It embraces all and sifts all, supporting that which is true and good and throwing down whatever is erroneous and bad. It is the test of honesty, and an honest man who knows right from wrong will support it and cannot be honest if he does not support it; for, whilst we say *free discussion*, we do not, like bigots or fanatics, tie ourselves to undiscussed propositions.

Returning you my thanks for this continued support, I can only say further, that I shall be very happy to come and see you all, and remaining, respectfully,

R. CARLILE.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ROBERT PEEL,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME
DEPARTMENT.

SIR, Newgate, June 11, 1825.
I SHALL make no apology for thus publicly addressing you, your conduct towards me deserves none. You are a public character, and consequently your actions, and every demeanour in that capacity, are, or ought to be, open to public inspection and public criticism.

About two months ago, I addressed you through the medium of a Petition*, imploring you in the most earnest

* *To the Right Honourable Robert Peel, His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department.*

The Petition of Thomas Ryley Perry, a prisoner in His Majesty's Gaol of Newgate

Sheweth,
That on the 19th Day of July 1824, the Petitioner was tried in the New Court, Old Bailey, before the Recorder of London and a Common Jury, upon an Indictment charging him with publishing a Blasphemous Libel, was pronounced Guilty, and sentenced to Three Years imprisonment in Newgate.

That the Petitioner humbly conceives, there are circumstances in his case, that warrant him in soliciting the attention of the Right Honourable Secretary.*

* I confess, that I cannot see this; the cases were precisely alike in be-

manner, and in respectful language, to intercede with his Majesty in my behalf for a remission of some portion of my sentence. That Petition, Sir, was on my part a step which I could not have taken, had I been differently circumstanced; I should have shrunk from it, but for the desperate situation in which a beloved wife and family are placed, on account of my incarceration. I yielded to the earnest entreaties of others, who pretended to know you, who represented you as a humane man—before whom it was only necessary fairly to lay such a case as mine to meet with immediate redress and to convince the world that malice and revenge are not the motives which actuate the British Cabinet, in thus keeping individuals immured for a series of years in dungeons, for opinions conscientiously adopted, and consequently as honestly promulgated. Had you condescended

That the Petitioner was the last of nine individuals, tried at the Old Bailey upon similar charges in the Months of June and July 1824.

That the Petitioner witnessed a difference of punishment awarded on the eight individuals tried in a previous session, according to the modes of Defence set up, either by themselves or by Counsel. In consequence of which, the Petitioner was induced to relinquish his own prepared Defence, and adopt the learned suggestions of a Reverend Gentleman of the Church of England; which Defence was complimented by the presiding Judge, for the ability displayed in the composition as well as in the manner it was delivered, his Lordship urging that ability as an additional reason why the Petitioner should have a greater extent of punishment.

That the Petitioner has a wife in a very delicate state of health, and two infant children totally destitute, and unable to provide for themselves, and that unless the Petitioner is speedily released to render them aid and protection, they must fall a sacrifice to want and privations.

The Petitioner therein begs that his case may be taken into consideration, and that the Right Honourable Secretary will condescend to recommend him to royal mercy for such a remission of his sentence as may to the Right Honourable Secretary seem meet.

And the Petitioner as in duty bound will ever Pray, &c.

THOMAS RYLEY PERRY.

Newgate, April 20, 1825.

ginning, middle and end. Little Jef's distinctions were a matter of caprice. The fact is that we ought not to accept the assistance of married men, whilst we can find single men and women.

R. C.

to have noticed my Petition or deigned to have transmitted me some kind of answer, I have no doubt it would have been the means of sparing to me the life of a lovely infant, whose loss can only be attributed to the incessant grief and agonizing sufferings of the mother. And which has added another victim to your policy, as well as to your religion.

Thus situated, Sir, with a conviction of not having injured a single human being—imprisoned for a term of years, knowing at the same time, I have done no wrong, that I have violated no known law: Can it be surprising that I should express my feelings in language not suited to the etiquette of your official situation? Wonder you, Sir, that the worm should turn when trod upon? Wonder no longer? I have appealed to you in your capacity as Secretary of State—that appeal has failed—you take no notice of it—I have Petitioned the House of Commons to give you an opportunity of stating your intentions—you are silent. An opportunity presented itself of displaying one act at least of magnanimity—an opportunity which a truly great mind would have eagerly embraced the result is a conviction to my mind, that your disposition assimilates more with the Tiger, than that of a man endowed with the smallest share of human benevolence. Envious mortal, laugh on! Glut your appetite with the groans of your victims! Feast your eyes on the squalid emaciated wretches with which England and Ireland abounds, and which misrule entitled constituted authority has produced !!

Go! view the wasting form, the life consuming grief of an innocent and virtuous female. The mother of one surviving boy—the wife of a victim to Christianity—of your VICTIM!! A sight such as this, cannot but enchant you—this sight I could procure you—and after having served the delicious banquet, I would recommend you to dinner with what appetite you may!

That you are aiming at popularity is obvious; and that your Jury-Bill, when passed into a law, of which there can be no doubt, will entitle you to applause, I for one will not deny; but I must qualify my approbation, by confessing it as my opinion, that it is calculated to make an impression on the public mind *only*, considering the quarter in which it originated—and for this simple reason, that it never entered the mind of a single individual that you were sufficiently liberal to bring forward such a measure. At present, the public are not in possession of the exact state of your views, on

this subject ; but granting them to be as liberal and extensive, as some people imagine and concerning which I have my doubts, still, Sir, this insulated measure is not calculated to perpetuate your fame. The future historian will take a wider latitude in pourtraying your political career. It will be his province and his duty, to develope the motives of your measures—to deduce facts from experience—to shew posterity how much the happiness of the people have been advanced or retarded by your plans as a legislator, and the amount of misery which shall have been engendered or dissipated, through your means as a minister of state.

One of the many evils connected with an open profession of Christianity, is a line of conduct diametrically opposite to the better, or moral part of that dispensation. What better proof can be desired to establish the hypocritical pretensions of its notorious advocates than their continual preaching, mercy ! mercy ! and yet exhibiting no signs of it themselves, if called upon to exercise that beautiful and benignant feeling. You are, Sir, not technically a Christian Minister, but certainly a professing ministerial Christian. Circumstances have placed you in a situation which entitles you to dispense some of that mercy "the quality of which" (as our immortal bard expresses it)

—“ Is not strained :

It droppeth as the gentle dew from Heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed :
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.
"Tis mighty in the mightiest; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power;
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
It is an attribute of God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.”

It has been alleged by our enemies as a proof of obstinacy on our part, that no one has ever appealed to a higher court. If, Sir, a simple petition to the Secretary of State is not thought worthy of even a reply, it may easily be imagined how far successful we should be in any other attempts at obtaining justice.

I have addressed you thus publicly for the purpose of exposing your conduct to the world, there are other topics relating to your observations in the House of Commons on

the presentation of a recent petition by Mr. Brougham from Dorchester and Newgate to which I might have alluded, but well I know that you will hear of this from another quarter. You may probably charge me with arrogance in thus presuming to address you; but to this I reply, that I consider myself your equal in every thing but property,—you have arisen by a strange freak of fortune and accidental circumstances to a situation, to which neither your birth nor your talent entitle you; I shall, therefore, take my leave of you with the following remarks from a living author "When honest industry raises a family to opulence and honours, its very original lowness sheds lustre on its elevation; but all its glory fades when it has given a wound and denies the balsam to a man as humble and as honest, as was your own ancestor."

I am, Sir, your and Christianity's Prisoner,

THOMAS RYLEY PERRY.

*Note.—It is a question with me, and ever has been so, whether Mr. Peel has any influence in this matter. It is notorious, that Lord Eldon has bargained for certain points in ministerial conduct with more than one of his late *eleves*. Gifford to wit. I shall see Old Eldon dead before I quarrel with Mr. Peel or write his character, though I freely give vent to Mr. Perry's wounded feelings.*

R. C.

TO MR. RICHARD CARLILE, DORCHESTER GAOL.

DEAR, SIR,

Sheffield, June 5, 1825.

You must make the *amende honourable*, or we shall be guilty of defamation; and liable to a prosecution for libel. Now I would not defame any person, neither would you; and, if an action could not be brought for libel, I would give the devil, his due. In consequence of your imperfect recollection of what you saw in my correspondence with Blackwell, and letter to the "Independent," you have assumed what is not strictly true. First. The Garden Street Pantomime were not announced by placards. I said it

"was pretty extensively announced;" but this was done by oral communications to the people; and, I am led to think, by a written circular to the Priests. Second. I said "the one who addressed a letter to the meeting, was prevented from attending in consequence of what he had drank the preceding day." It has since been explained to me, that though this person was thus disordered, it was owing to quality more than quantity; he did not drink more than a glass, and the bowels were more disordered than the head. Third. It was not the Priest of the Chapel, nor is his name *Blakely*, but *Blackwell*, a bookseller, and preacher amongst the new connection of Methodists. For Methodists, Baptists, Calvinists, and all others will join on such occasions as these, to vilify their common enemy.

I lent Mr. Blackwell "*Watson Refuted*," and, on returning it to me, he observed, "that he had no hopes of me after reading that, if I could believe that, I could not be made a Christian." He also believed that the Infidels were so insignificant in Sheffield, that they were glad to catch at anything to get them into notice; hence their wish for discussion, &c., that, by attracting attention, they might entrap the unwary, simple, and illiterate followers of Christ. Now, I beg to retort upon Mr. B., that it is he and his co-adjutors who entrap the simple, unwary, and illiterate. Men who embrace antichristian opinions are wary, literate, and too wise to be duped by J. B. and Co. They use their reasoning powers. They discriminate between fable and fiction on the one hand, and truth undisguised on the other. Hence their rejection of Christianity. I should think Mr. Blackwell can hardly believe the Holy Ghost, where he tells us, "That not many wise are called" and "the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." If he did believe this, he might be sure, that the majority of wise men would be antichristians: but from what he said, it appears, he thinks all the antichristians unwary, simple, and illiterate!

I have information from several places in this neighbourhood, that antichristianity is making a silent, sure, and rapid progress; and whilst the Christicoles are hugging themselves in fancied security, the progress of intellect is such as will shortly astound them all. Not wishing to trespass further,

I remain,

Yours truly,

W. V. HOLMES.

This letter affects my statement but in a very slight degree. Mine was near enough to be called truth. The principle of the affair was correctly stated. Is this all you have to say in answer, "Pearce, Bywater and Co.?"

R. C.

The following petition was got up last year in Glasgow, and signed by four hundred and twenty persons; but of the history of its presentation or of any application to that effect, I am ignorant.

R. C.

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament Assembled.

The Petition of the undersigned inhabitants of Glasgow and its neighbourhood.

HUMBLY SHEWETH,
THAT the happiness of mankind altogether depends on the rectitude of their conduct. That in order to enable them to practice such conduct, it is necessary that their opinions be correct, especially on subjects which materially affect their interests. That these desirable objects cannot be attained without unlimited enquiry, free discussion, and liberty to publish whatever may be deemed of consequence in the elucidation of truth.

That, impressed with these sentiments, and because they could not conscientiously attend any place of worship with which they were acquainted, a number of your petitioners, in the year 1811, associated for the purpose of improving one another in morals and useful knowledge. That in this institution, latterly known by the name of "the Glasgow Zetetic Society," lectures and discourses were read on subjects of importance, and the remarks of those who might dissent in opinion solicited as the best means of removing error and prejudice.

That religion occasionally became the subject of their inquiries; but on account of their notions respecting it being different from those commonly professed, their conduct gave offence to some of the Clergy of this place, who had intimated their determination, unless the Society's meetings were "immediately given up," to inform the Lord Advocate

of Scotland in order to have them suppressed. That, aware of the disagreement which frequently exists between the letter and execution of the law, and holding that the practice of law officers and the decision of courts are the surest criterion to judge by of what law is, the society were ignorant of their conduct being illegal; they therefore resolved, in the mean time, to continue their meetings and to seek advice from the Lord Advocate. That his Lordship warned them of their danger and of the necessity he lay under, of prosecuting whenever a case should be laid before him—at the same time, he intimated that they might “adopt lawful means with the view to the law being altered.”

That the Zetetic Society instantly discontinued its meetings from the conviction that obedience to the laws is the first duty of an enlightened people, whatever they may think of the nature and tendency of the laws that exist to their disadvantage.

That religion is of the utmost importance, that a thorough investigation of it is necessary to a well grounded assurance of its divine authority, that, nevertheless, your petitioners' have been restrained in their researches and the expression of their thoughts on this momentous subject, and that by consequence, their knowledge and happiness must be defective.

That your petitioners conceive, that opinions which are not embodied into actions detrimental to the peace and welfare of the community, ought not in justice, to render those who entertain them liable to prosecution.

That they can assure your Honourable House, that the Christian world do not think penal laws or any external aid necessary to the support of Christianity; that, generally, believers consider it a libel on the religion of Jehovah, to suppose it incapable of withstanding opposition without the assistance of human laws, which they deem infinitely weaker than itself.

May it therefore please your honourable house, to assent to and recommend to the other branches of the legislature, a repeal of all the statutes existing against free discussion on religion, as well as on other subjects.

So pray,

YOUR PETITIONERS.

Glasgow, April 28, 1824.

FREEMASONRY!

THE Lectures for the first or Entered Apprentice's Degree by Dr. Hemmings (not Hammond, as before printed) have been received, and I shall be much obliged by receiving the Lectures for the second and third degrees. I have also Preston's Illustrations of Masonry, Hutchinson's Spirit of Masonry, and a volume of Brother Finch's pick-pocket rubbish. This Masonry, as a whole, is more abominable than religion. It has all the vices of religion combined with many characteristic vices of its own. There are some pamphlets publishing called the "Cat out of the Bag;" but they constitute nothing more than a burlesque. Mine is to be a serious and complete exposure of Masonry in all its ramifications. My present knowledge of it is extensive, perhaps more than any one brother knew before; but I desire all the information that can be given me. The paper of a Scotch mason has beeen received from manchester and also the paper from Leeds. My letters on this subject will commence in No. 1, Vol. 12. The remainder of Dr. Heinming's Lectures is all that I now particular crave; and of these I have no need for illustration. They only happen to be the most modern and authorised publication on the subject. I should not object to see Mr. Williams' Lectures: and when ready his long promised history.

R. C.

NOTICE.

I HEREBY inform individual subscribers, that I do not think it fair to the readers of both publications, and they are read by nearly all the same persons, that the matter of one should be repeated in the other. This is often required by subscri-

bers; but the circumstance must displease all but subscribers. I allude to the Newgate Magazine and this publication. Any article published in either publication is good and effectual as if published in both. The insertion of Mr. Perry's Petition of late in both was an error or misunderstanding on the part of the Printer. It will be avoided in future, and must enhance the value of both publications. It is therefore requested, that no proposition of the kind be made in future by our friends.

I have no reasonable alternative but to sell the house 84, Fleet Street to the Committee for the improvement of that spot; and as I have been generously met by the members of that Committee, as to the value of my interest in it, I acquiesce. The alternative would have been, that the Committee would have got me out, by an inquest to pronounce the house insecure, which is really the case, unsupported by others. This would have happened, if I had stood out, and I should have been a great loser on that ground. We have taken the small shop 135, Fleet Street, until we can suit ourselves with a better. To this address, it is requested, that all communications be sent after midsummer day.

R. CARLILE.

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Printed and Published by R. CARLILE, 84, Fleet Street.—All Correspondences for "The Republican" to be left at the place of publication.